



# Sweet.

By Joquita Burka



## Why do Southerners love sweet tea? We like it oozing sweetness.

Deeply, richly sweet. Ice cold and by the gallon. Not that we're addicted. Sometimes we can go all the way 'til lunch before our first glass. Try it yourself. Have a few glasses of this nectar while enjoying some sauce-dripping barbecue or fresh, boiled shrimp.

You just may find yourself brewing up your own home version.

You might say tea was our destiny. The first tea in the New World came to South Carolina in 1799. André Michaux, a French botanist, brought tea plants—*camellia sinensis*, a part of the camellia family—and other flowering plants to what is now Middleton Place, the plantation home of Arthur Middleton (who incidentally signed the Declaration of Independence). Today, just a few miles from that original site, Charleston Tea Plantation on Wadmalaw Island is the only tea plantation in North America. Charleston Tea harvests fresh leaf from May through October but is open year-round. At the plantation, which is about 30 minutes by car from downtown Charleston, you can tour the grounds, sample the product and purchase your very own fresh, appropriately named American Classic Tea.

### Classic Southern Sweet Tea

5 cups cold water

3 cups sugar

4 family-sized tea bags

Bring water to boil. Remove from heat and add sugar. Stir. Add tea bags and steep for 20 minutes. Remove tea bags and pour mixture into a gallon pitcher. Fill with ice and cold water. Stir. Serve ice cold.



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### Tea-bits:

- Unable to sell hot tea in the summer heat of the 1904 World's Fair, an enterprising vendor created iced tea. We South Carolinians will be forever grateful.
- Of the three basic types of tea—black, green and oolong—about 90 percent of what the U.S. consumes is black tea, also the favorite of sweet tea drinkers.
- It's official! The state legislature has named South Carolina-grown tea as the Official Hospitality Beverage of the state.
- South Carolina is the only state to have ever produced tea commercially.

### Sweet Tea on the Rocks

The Southern love of sweet tea extends to spirits. Wadmalaw Island is also home to a small local enterprise, FireFly Distillery, that has made quite a name through its unique flavors, even winning the Silver Medal from the Beverage Testing Institute. Their biggest seller? You guessed it. FireFly Sweet Tea Vodka. [fireflyvodka.com](http://fireflyvodka.com)

### A Daily Palmer

½ FireFly Sweet Tea Vodka

½ Pink lemonade

Courtesy FireFly Vodka



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